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Security Council

Provisional

Fifty-third Year

3900th Meeting
Tuesday, 30 June 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Amorim
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Essonghé
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Japan	Mr. Owada
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	Sweden	Mr. Dahlgren
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation in the occupied Arab territories

Letter dated 23 June 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/558)

98-85546 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the occupied Arab territories

Letter dated 23 June 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/558)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Bangladesh, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Norway, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Gold (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Baali (Algeria), Mr. Hossain (Bangladesh), Mr. García (Colombia), Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba), Mr. Elaraby (Egypt), Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia), Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Hasan (Iraq), Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan), Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait), Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon), Mr. Rastam (Malaysia), Mr. Ould Deddach (Mauritania), Mr. Snoussi (Morocco), Mr. Kolby (Norway), Mr. Al-Sameen (Oman), Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar), Mr. Al-Ahmed (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic), Mr. Hachani (Tunisia), Mr. Samhan Al-Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates) and Mr. Al-Ashtal (Yemen) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 26 June 1998 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/1998/587 and which reads as follows:

"I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, to participate in the upcoming meeting of the Security Council on Tuesday, 30 June 1998, with regard to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the current debate in accordance with the rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

There being on objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 29 June 1998 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which reads as follows:

"In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to request to participate, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, in the debate relating to the decision of the Government of Israel to expand the physical and administrative structure of Jerusalem."

On previous occasions, the Security Council has extended invitations to representatives of other United Nations bodies in connection with the consideration of matters on its agenda. In accordance with past practice in this matter, I propose that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 29 June 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

"I have the honour to request the Security Council to extend an invitation under rule 39 of the rules of procedure to Mr. Ali Al-Salafi, Chargé d'affaires of the Office of the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to participate in the Security Council's formal open debate on the situation in the occupied Arab territories, which will take place on Tuesday, 30 June 1998."

This letter will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/1998/588. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to His Excellency Mr. Al-Salafi.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to the request dated 23 June 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/558).

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to the following documents: S/1998/481, S/1998/511, S/1998/535 and S/1998/557, letters dated 8, 15, 18 and 22 June 1998, respectively, from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General; and S/1998/579, letter dated 26 June 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The first speaker inscribed on my list is the Permanent Observer of Palestine, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Today is the last day of your presidency this month, Sir, and we consider it fortunate that this important meeting is being held under your presidency, in view of your personal qualities and of the positions of the friendly country of Portugal. Allow me also to extend my thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Njuguna Mahugu, the Permanent Representative of Kenya, with whom we worked last month on the same issue during his presidency of the Council.

The Security Council is meeting today to consider an issue of great importance to us in Palestine, to the Arab and Muslim worlds and to the international community as a whole – namely, the issue of Jerusalem, the Holy City of three monotheistic religions.

Since its inception, the United Nations has dealt with the issue of Jerusalem in a manner commensurate with its importance and reflective of its special status. The United Nations adopted a special international regime — the *corpus separatum* — for the city and later refrained from recognizing the de facto situation resulting from the war of 1948. It then effectively dealt with the occupation resulting from the war of 1967 with the aim of preventing Israel, the occupying Power, from carrying out any measures aimed at changing the legal status or demographic composition of East Jerusalem, as an integral part of the territories occupied since 1967 and to which the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 is applicable. The Security Council has adopted 16 resolutions with regard to Jerusalem, 10 of which were adopted after the occupation of 1967. The Council reaffirmed in these resolutions its rejection of all the Israeli measures, considering them null and void and calling upon Member States not to recognize them and not to move their embassies to Jerusalem.

Thus, there exists what may be considered a clear international consensus concerning the issue of Jerusalem. This position is based upon a deep understanding of the important religious, historical and political factors of this issue. Israel, in return, has taken a position in direct opposition to that of the international community and continues to ignore its will and to violate international law and Security Council resolutions. This position refuses to recognize Palestinian and Arab rights and persists in monopolizing Jerusalem, considering it to be solely Jewish or Israeli. Consequently, such a position negates the possibility of achieving peace and guarantees the continuation of war and hatred in the region.

Over the years, Israel has adopted a number of policies and carried out many measures to impose its position and to create certain facts on the ground. These illegal, appalling and immoral policies and measures include attempts to annex occupied territories, the confiscation of lands, the expansion of the city's municipal boundaries, and the isolation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. They also include the influx of 150,000 settlers in an attempt to create a specific demographic composition; legal and de facto discrimination between Jews and non-Jews; and the direct oppression of Palestinian Jerusalemites, the confiscation of their identity cards, the demolition of their homes and preventing them from living in the city of their ancestors.

All of these actions have been repeatedly condemned by the international community, which has refused to recognize their results. All of these actions have been challenged by our people, who have succeeded in thwarting some of the aims of these actions, including the fact that Palestinian Jerusalemites still constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of East Jerusalem within the legal boundaries of the municipality of the city. However, their suffering is immense and their feelings of injustice and pain are immeasurable. These Israeli measures have created and are still creating a situation that could lead to the explosion of the whole region at any moment.

A few years ago the peace process came to the Middle East, along with the Palestinian-Israeli agreements within its framework, according to which the two sides agreed to negotiate the status of Jerusalem in the negotiations on the final settlement. Palestinian Jerusalemites have exercised their rights in participating in the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council within the Jerusalem electoral district. Furthermore, additional guarantees were given to the Palestinian side with regard to the preservation of the Palestinian institutions in the city. All of this constituted a significant change and was expected to lead to a comprehensive change in Israeli policies and measures with regard to Jerusalem, based upon compliance with the goals of the peace process and the need for all the parties to refrain from creating new facts on the ground that would abort the forthcoming negotiations. This was not completely adhered to by the former Israeli Government, but at least that Government did not comprehensively violate these commitments or undertake measures that could destroy the peace process in its entirety.

When the current Israeli Government came to power, it set us back to the period before the peace process and adopted, carried out and even intensified the aforementioned policies and practices. It opened the tunnel in the vicinity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, following which the Security Council adopted resolution 1073 (1996). Then it began the construction of a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim to the south of occupied Jerusalem, which was the focus of the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, which was convened after the Security Council failed twice to adopt a resolution in this regard because of the vetoes exercised by one of its permanent members. This was followed by a series of other illegal Israeli actions, particularly the escalation of settler colonialism inside the Old City in Burj al-Laqlaq and outside it in Ras Al-Amud, Silwan and the Mount of Olives, to which we referred in several letters addressed to this Council.

Lastly, the Israeli Government decided on 21 June 1998 to adopt a plan aimed at strengthening the illegal hold of Israel on Jerusalem. This is the direct reason for the Security Council's meeting today. The plan would expand the municipal boundaries of the city and establish an "umbrella authority" to include a number of illegal settlements in the West Bank. This represents a concrete step towards the illegal annexation of more occupied Palestinian lands to the already illegally expanded Jerusalem municipality in order to maintain a specific demographic composition with the aim of furthering the process of the judaization of the city.

The Israeli Prime Minister said on 18 June 1998, when he was announcing the plan:

> "I think this is a basic change in Jerusalem's status which will be remembered as a turning point." (*S/52/958*)

The Prime Minister also said:

> "The first thing we are doing is to link 'Greater Jerusalem' and the second thing is strengthening the Jewish majority in Jerusalem." (*ibid.*)

With regard to the illegal settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim, he stated:

> "Write it down. You will see houses at 'Har Homa', many houses, by the year 2000." (*ibid.*)

Could there be any more blatant revelation than these outrageous statements of the nature of the plan and its dangerous and malicious goals? This plan constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, several Security Council resolutions, and those of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. It manifests contempt for the values which these laws and resolutions represent and for the will of the international community and its collective position.

What will the Security Council do in the face of all this? We hope that the Council will have the sufficient will finally to undertake the necessary measures to guarantee the rescinding of this plan and to prevent Israel, the occupying Power, from undertaking any further illegal actions in Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied territories, beginning with the adoption of the draft resolution sponsored by the Arab Group in this regard. We believe that the Council is obligated to do this

in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Here, I will have to recall that the Israeli plan and the other Israeli policies and practices in Jerusalem to which I have referred also gravely violate the agreements reached between the two sides within the framework of the peace process in the Middle East. I said, "I will have to recall" it, because there is not much left of this peace process anyway, thanks to Mr. Netanyahu and his Government. The policies and practices of the Israeli Government not only violate the agreements, but are clearly aimed at the systematic destruction of those agreements and at discarding the entire peace process. It is sufficient to refer to Israel's long-standing rejection of the American proposals aimed at revitalizing this process, which were accepted by the Palestinian side despite our understanding that the proposals are incomparably closer to the Israeli than to the Palestinian position. The Prime Minister and the Israeli Government do not hesitate to use old and new gimmicks in an attempt to cover up the reality of the Israeli position. We see them immersed in coordinated propaganda campaigns to direct accusations against the Palestinian side; we see them invent, for example, the idea of the illegal popular referendum with regard to the recent American proposals; and, finally, there is the idea of a new peace conference -- as if the Israeli side had complied with the results of the first Conference in Madrid in order to discuss another conference. All of this is no longer capable of covering up the reality, and the Israeli plan for Jerusalem is a stark reminder of that reality. This plan constitutes another basic step towards the Israeli Government's final divorce from the peace process.

It is not possible to imagine the peace process being revitalized and continuing, given the existence of such a plan. It is unacceptable for the Israeli violations in Jerusalem to continue, even if there is somehow a sudden Israeli change with regard to the American proposals. For our Palestinian people, Jerusalem is a red line: we cannot give it up. This is a stubborn reality that all the parties need to comprehend.

Israel says that our coming forward to complain to the Security Council violates the existing agreements. That, of course, is a ridiculous claim that does not even deserve to be addressed. But there is another party that says that this action is counter-productive and that consideration by the Council of these Israeli violations will harm the peace process. This is really very unfortunate. How, legally, politically or morally, can anyone say something like that? How can it be said that, despite the responsibilities of the Council in accordance with the Charter, the Council should not intervene in Middle East affairs? How can it be said, in the face not only of Israel's violations of international law and the agreements reached, but of its persistence in these violations, that it will be counter-productive for the Council to deal with this issue? How can it be said that Palestinian complaints about these violations — our mere complaining and seeking to stop violations that were not stopped by the continuous efforts of the sponsors of the peace process — will harm this process? How can anyone make a comparison between actions in violation of international law and the reactions to those actions, which are entirely based on international law? It is unreasonable and unacceptable, and it is our hope that this position will soon be changed, if not for the sake of fairness and credibility, at least for the sake of the Charter and the United Nations.

In spite of everything, the Palestinian people have high hopes that this time all members of the Council will enable the Council to exercise its responsibilities, at least on the basis of an understanding of the great importance of the issue of Jerusalem and the desire to contribute to rescuing the peace process and to preserving the United Nations Charter, international law and Security Council resolutions.

The President: I thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Israel, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Gold (Israel): Fifty years ago the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem surrendered. Its Jewish inhabitants were expelled. Fifty-eight synagogues, including the 700-year-old Hurva synagogue, were destroyed and desecrated. Free access of the Jewish people to their holy places, particularly the Western Wall, was denied. Even Israeli Muslims were precluded from gaining access to the mosques of the Old City. During all those years, from 1948 until 1967, the Security Council never met once to consider the denial of Israeli rights or Jewish rights in Jerusalem.

With Jerusalem's reunification, the State of Israel is determined never to let this happen again. Israel's position in Jerusalem is not a product of these recent events alone, but emanates from a continuous historical link between the Jewish people and their eternal capital, which has endured from the Roman destruction of Jerusalem to this century. Equally, the Jewish people's

majority in Jerusalem is not a present-day demographic development, but had already been restored by the middle of the previous century, in 1864, when Jerusalem was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

Today, Israel has a special responsibility to preserve and protect Jerusalem as a city that is holy to each of the great faiths in our region: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Israel undertook in the 1994 Washington Declaration to respect the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem and to give high priority to this historical role in permanent status negotiations.

Besides safeguarding the access of all faiths to the holy sites, Israel has carefully sought to ensure the development of Jerusalem for all its peoples. While the total population of Jerusalem grew after unification from 266,300 in 1967 to 603,000 in 1996, the Palestinian Arabs did not find themselves losing their relative position in the city. Indeed, if the Palestinians constituted 25.8 per cent of the population in 1967, by 1996 they made up 30 per cent of Jerusalem's population.

Preserving Jerusalem requires planning. Across the Middle East, and in many parts of the world, cities face very different alternative courses of development. Rapid urbanization can overwhelm cities, leading to an exhaustion of all land reserves, as downtown areas become enveloped with shanty towns, substandard housing and increased poverty. Alternatively, cities can lose population: a lack of adequate housing and employment opportunities can force residents to relocate to more prosperous suburban areas, leaving the core city to decay. Indeed, during the period prior to 1967, thousands of Palestinian Arabs left Jerusalem, seeking better opportunities in the city of Amman.

The Government of Israel is determined to protect Jerusalem for all its residents and has therefore taken a ministerial-level initiative to strengthen the city. This is not a new political programme affecting the political status of Jerusalem. This is not a plan to gerrymander district lines in order to affect political outcomes. It consists of a municipal blueprint for bolstering the city's economy and infrastructure. Israel's actions to preserve and protect Jerusalem are fully in accordance with the Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which provides that Jerusalem remain under exclusive Israeli jurisdiction while remaining an issue for permanent status negotiations. It is for this reason that the Palestinian Authority undertook in the 1997 Note for the Record to close all of its offices in Jerusalem, which is outside of its area of jurisdiction. It is these clear obligations of the Interim Agreement — witnessed by the United States, Russia, the European Union, Norway, Egypt and Jordan — that must provide the basis for gauging the actions of the two sides. These obligations were, after all, freely entered into by the parties and represent binding undertakings.

Security Council debate on any issue must be based on facts and not on unproven political argumentation or claims. It should be recalled that in September 1996 the Security Council was informed that Israel had opened a tunnel under the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Of course, Israel had opened a 30-centimetre wall of a pre-existing archaeological tunnel from the Hasmonean period that was over 2,000 years old. The tunnel itself did not go under the Temple Mount, on which the Al-Aqsa Mosque is situated, and the opening of the tunnel was not even near the mosque. Nonetheless, the assertion persisted. Today, Israel's municipal plans for Jerusalem have equally generated waves of disinformation.

First, in his letter to the President of the Security Council, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Republic of the Sudan states that Israel's Jerusalem plan comes

> "in the context of annexing more occupied Palestinian territory" *[S/1998/558]*.

This is simply false. If a decision is taken to shift the municipal boundary of Jerusalem, the Government of Israel has stated that it will strictly apply to areas westward of Jerusalem that are within the pre-1967 lines. The planned adjustment is intended to provide land for housing and high-technology industries, thereby creating affordable homes and new employment opportunities for Jerusalem residents. The populations of the major western suburbs are not even being incorporated into Jerusalem, according to this plan. A similar adjustment of Jerusalem's western municipal border occurred in May 1993 without being the subject of United Nations debate, for good reason: this is entirely an internal Israeli matter on the municipal-administrative level rather than on the international level.

Secondly, Israel's critics point to the proposal for an "umbrella municipality" as a scheme to give Jerusalem administrative powers over Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The Palestinian Permanent Observer stated, in his letter to the Secretary-General dated 22 June, that the "umbrella municipality" is a

"concrete step towards...illegal annexation" *[S/1998/557]*.

This is simply not true. The "umbrella municipality" is nothing more than a coordination mechanism between Jerusalem and surrounding communities. It does not entail a shift in municipal boundaries. It does not entail the extension of municipal authority over any Israeli settlements. It allows neighbouring communities to coordinate services such as public works, sanitation, water, public-health clinics and education, with the purpose of creating economies of scale to reduce costs. These coordination mechanisms exist in different forms worldwide, without prejudice to formal municipal boundaries: in Brussels, Lyon, Montreal, Toronto and San Francisco.

Today, such patterns of regional coordination exist between Jerusalem and Palestinian cities in the West Bank that are under the complete jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. For example, today Ramallah supplies water to the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Kafr Aqab. Does Israel believe that this is a conspiracy by the Palestinian Authority to erode Israel's status in northern Jerusalem? No. It is a practical solution to a local problem. Today, part of the sewage of Bethlehem and Beit Jalla flows westward to Jerusalem's waste-treatment plants. Does local cooperation in sewage indicate that someone is planning to alter Jerusalem's borders to the south? Nonsense. These are vital forms of coordination between neighbouring municipalities and have no international political implications.

Thirdly, in a letter to the Secretary-General dated 9 June 1998 that was distributed to the Security Council, the Palestinian Observer claimed that Israel's Ministry of the Interior had approved 58 housing units for Jewish settlers in the area of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. These facts are wrong. The Interior Ministry's Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee approved plans for the construction of 100 housing units, not 58. But these 100 units are for the Palestinian Arab residents of the A-Tur neighbourhood in Jerusalem, just next to the Mount of Olives. The 9 June letter was being considered for the preamble in a proposed draft resolution being considered for the Security Council. Does the Security Council wish to take any part in a PLO complaint against housing for Palestinian Arabs?

The greatest problem for Jerusalem today does not come from Israel's efforts to preserve and protect this city. Presently, Israel faces massive Palestinian non-compliance in fighting terrorism and preventing violence. From the signing of the Oslo agreements to the last Israeli election, nearly 250 Israelis have been killed in successive suicide bombings that emanated from areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority. When Israel signed the Hebron Protocol on 15 January 1997, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat undertook in the Note for the Record to "combat systematically and effectively terrorist organizations and infrastructure." Yet in the last year it was disclosed that bomb factories belonging to the Hamas organization were operating in Ramallah and in Bethlehem, just outside of Jerusalem. The bulk of the infrastructure used for repeated suicide bombing attacks in the heart of Jerusalem remains intact.

Additionally, in the Note for the Record, Chairman Arafat undertook to prevent violence and hostile propaganda. Yet on 19 January 1998, Mr. Arafat himself appeared on official Palestinian television praising Yahya Ayyash, the mastermind of the Hamas suicide bombings, calling him "the example, the model and the goal" of the Palestinians. This is simply unacceptable. Real peace requires that Governments educate for peace rather than legitimize hatred, violence and further bloodshed.

Israel has a long list of Palestinian Authority violations in the West Bank and around Jerusalem. And while it is useful to keep United Nations Members apprised of these issues, Israel brings its complaints directly to the negotiating table and not to the United Nations. Israel is seeking to complete a new set of understandings with the PLO, through the assistance of the United States, that will provide a framework for achieving Palestinian compliance with the Note for the Record and the Oslo II Interim Agreement. Equally, the place to address Palestinian concerns with Israeli policies is at the negotiating table and not in every multilateral body.

Israel is determined to make this peace process work. No State has been more frustrated with the lack of progress in the negotiations in recent months — for the lack of Palestinian compliance in security places, first and foremost, Israeli lives at risk. The international community has an enormous responsibility in this regard; it can support the existing framework for direct negotiations between the parties or undermine it with sterile political resolutions that have little factual basis.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of the State of Bahrain wishes at the outset to express its great appreciation to all the members

of the Security Council for responding to the Arab Group's request to consider the grave situation resulting from the Israeli Government's decision of 21 June 1998 on expanding the municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem. That decision would change the legal status of the city as a Holy City for all three major monotheistic religions, would increase Israel's grip on the Holy City, and would eradicate its Arab character by changing its demographic and population makeup. This is in contravention of all relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Since taking power, the current Israeli Government has taken actions that are inimical to the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories. That Government has abandoned all its commitments. It has turned its back on the peace agreements concluded with the Palestinians. As a result of the policies and practices of the Israeli Government, the Middle East peace process is now at an impasse. The Israeli Government's attacks against the peace process have continued in spite of intense efforts by the sponsors of that process — the United States of America and the Russian Federation — and by the States of the European Union to save it and return it to the right course. But the Israeli Government has persisted in its intransigence, flouting all agreements signed with the Arab side based on the principle of land for peace and on complete withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian lands, including Jerusalem, from southern Lebanon and from occupied Syrian Golan.

This month, the Israeli authorities of the present Israeli Government have taken a number of illegal measures, which include the following. First, they have created a so-called civil guard in the Israeli settlements on the West Bank. These armed groups, whose members surely belong to extremist settler circles, pose a threat to the security of Palestinians. This step was taken in clear contravention of Security Council resolution 904 (1994), which called upon Israel to confiscate the arms of settlers to prevent their use against unarmed Palestinians.

Secondly, the Ariel settlement has now been officially declared a city, which means that it no longer falls within the occupied territories and is therefore non-negotiable.

Thirdly, there has been systematic demolition of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem on hollow and varied pretexts. People have been forcibly thrown out of their homes, and their homes have been confiscated by settlers under the very noses of the Israeli police — and, indeed, with their protection.

Fourthly, the municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem have been expanded to include illegal settlements adjacent to Jerusalem, with the aim of judaizing the city. This plan includes the speedy construction of roads and the expansion of services between the settlements and Jerusalem, and an increase in the number of settlements.

When it was occupied by Israel in 1967, the Holy City of Jerusalem was about 7 square kilometres in area; 72 square kilometres have since been added. The expansionist plan will increase the area to 184 square kilometres. This plan constitutes an attempt to change the demographic composition of the city of Jerusalem by increasing the number of Jewish inhabitants to nearly 1 million in order to make them the majority.

The Council of Ministers of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council met at Riyadh on Sunday, 28 June 1998, and declared that

> "It utterly and completely rejects and condemns the decision of the Israeli Government to expand the geographic boundaries of the Holy City of Jerusalem and to attempt to change its demographic and population makeup, because such measures are contrary to the norms of international law and to binding international resolutions.
>
> "It further rejects the Israeli policy of expanding Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories and the creation of armed militias composed of Israeli settlers, believing that such acts constitute a breach of the framework of the Madrid peace conference and of all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 252 (1968), which declares such measures by Israel in Jerusalem to be null and void."

Moreover, the final communiqué of the twenty-fifth session of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference contained the following statement.

> "The Conference urged the international community, particularly the co-sponsors of the peace process, to pressure Israel to comply with the resolutions of international legality and to end its settlement policy. It called on the Security Council to revive the International Committee for supervising and monitoring the ban on settlements in Al-Quds and the other occupied Palestinian and

> Arab territories. It also urged the international community and all States providing economic and financial assistance to Israel to stop such assistance which Israel uses to carry out its settler colonization scheme in occupied Arab territories, in occupied Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan." [*S/1998/311, para. 34*]

Such illegal Israeli policies are a clear breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the 16 Security Council resolutions on holy Jerusalem. They are a breach of the General Assembly resolutions adopted at the tenth emergency special session, all of which call upon Israel, the occupying Power, to refrain from making any administrative or demographic changes in Jerusalem until agreement is reached within the framework of the peace process, which will decide the fate of Holy Jerusalem.

It is clear that this official Israeli policy does not support a just peace. Indeed, it is a premeditated act against the peace process. Instead of refraining from such measures, we find Israel attempting to prevent any genuine progress in the peace talks so that it may continue to take illegal measures to change the facts on the ground in the occupied Arab territories, including in Holy Jerusalem.

The grave situation resulting from these Israeli measures is the reason the Group of Arab States called for this urgent meeting of the Security Council today. We expect the Security Council to fully shoulder its responsibility to compel Israel to respect previous Security Council resolutions on Jerusalem and to live up to its commitments under the Fourth Geneva Convention. We hope that the Security Council, in response to the request of the Group of Arab States, will take the appropriate measures to confront the illegal Israeli actions.

A firm Security Council position, based on its responsibilities to deter illegal Israeli action, in accordance with the Charter, will reaffirm the Security Council's credibility, imposing international legitimacy based on international law for Palestinian and all Arab occupied territories.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation)(*interpretation from Russian*): Moscow received with alarm the news of the decision of the Government of Israel to expand the municipal borders of Jerusalem, which would link Jerusalem to a number of major Israeli settlements on the West Bank of the River Jordan. We share the international community's negative reaction to this ill-advised and ill-timed Israeli measure and to other settlement activities undertaken by the Israeli authorities.

In the light of the gravity of the situation, Russia supported the request of the Group of Arab States for an urgent discussion of this question at a formal meeting of the Security Council. Israel's decision further complicates the Middle East peace process negotiations, particularly in the context of the ongoing highly complex phase of drawing up a mutually acceptable formula for the next round of redeployment of the Israeli army in the West Bank.

Unilateral acts against and violations of the status quo in East Jerusalem run counter to norms of international law, contradict the concluded Palestinian-Israeli agreements and are unacceptable in the context of the foundations of the Middle East peace process insofar as they are not in keeping with the which maintains that Jerusalem's fate will be the subject of final status talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Such acts are aimed at changing the demographic composition of the city and at altering its geographic and historical borders.

Russia, as one of the sponsors of the peace process, once again calls upon the Government of Israel to demonstrate a constructive approach to a settlement with its Arab neighbours and to refrain from resorting to unilateral administrative measures in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, which can cast a pall on the prospects for negotiations.

We are convinced that the Security Council will take a stand in favour of a speedy resolution of the problems relating to East Jerusalem, which will ensure progress in the peace process and respond to the aspirations of the peoples of the Middle East.

Mr. Sáenz Biolley (Costa Rica)(*interpretation from Spanish*): From the moment when you, Mr. President, initiated consultations among the members of the Security Council concerning the specific request made by the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations on 22 June 1998 to hold a formal meeting of the Security Council, the delegation of Costa Rica expressed its support for the idea that this principal organ of the United Nations should hold an open debate to consider the current situation of the Middle East peace process.

In that regard, Costa Rica believes that, while the substance and dynamics of the peace process have been determined by the parties, the Security Council has a

responsibility regarding this issue and that it should transparently and democratically hold an open debate on the current state of the peace process in that troubled region.

All Members of the United Nations are aware that for more than 50 years Costa Rica has maintained and continues to maintain a deep and constant friendship with the people and the State of Israel. It is well known that for more than 50 years Costa Rica has supported the right of the Israeli people to exist as a free and independent State. It is also well known that Costa Rica, on all occasions and in all forums, has upheld Israel's right to secure borders that guarantee its existence as a member of the community of nations.

Clearly, of course, this bond that Costa Rica has maintained and continues to maintain with Israel has made it difficult for us to maintain similarly full friendly and cooperative relations with an important group of United Nations Member States, as we would like to do.

Consequently, Costa Rica believes it can speak frankly and unreservedly to the friend, for that is the primary value of friendship. Costa Rica believes that peace in the Near East, the peace so laboriously worked out and developed, is perhaps the most remarkable undertaking in diplomatic negotiation in modern times. The peace of the brave in the Middle East is a unique and superior thing, and as such it should be preserved and made to prevail at all costs.

Thus, my country is concerned about the meaning and effects on the peace process of political acts, such as the administrative programme announced on 18 June 1998 by the Government of Israel, which comprises a set of measures relating to the city of Jerusalem.

The final, permanent status of Jerusalem must be determined and agreed in the manner established by the parties to the peace process. In that regard, Costa Rica takes this opportunity to make a clear appeal for compliance with the substance of the agreements, for actions to be in keeping with that which was established in Oslo and, in particular, for the parties to fulfil all their obligations without reservations and conditions.

Costa Rica trusts that the measures announced by the Government of Israel will not be put into effect and calls on the parties to resume quickly the implementation of the peace process.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): Developments in Israel affecting the occupied Arab territories are once again being debated in the Security Council in an atmosphere of persistent uneasiness over the future of the Middle East peace process. The archaeological excavations in the area of Burj al-Laqlaq, the establishment of civil guards in settlements in the West Bank and the expansion of the municipal authority of Jerusalem have contributed, above all else, to raising the level of international apprehension.

As noted recently in an editorial published by *The New York Times*,

> "any abrupt changes in the city's delicate status quo, particularly in the absence of negotiating progress with the Palestinians, can be explosive." [*24 June 1998, p. 24, "Jerusalem's Boundaries"*]

It is clear that the concerns of those who have called for this special meeting are very widely disseminated.

Until not long ago, we witnessed a series of impressive strides towards the establishment of a lasting basis for regional harmony in the Middle East. In the absence of the courage and determination displayed then by the leaders of the region, those bold steps would not have been possible. There were many historical milestones along this path, from the Madrid Conference of 1991 to the redeployment of Israeli troops from Hebron. The Brazilian Government followed this evolution attentively, moved by the sincerest hopes that a new pattern of cooperation in the Middle East would herald a new era of understanding among all its residents, irrespective of their ethnic or religious affiliation, whose positive impact would be felt far beyond the region.

We remain convinced that in spite of the setbacks suffered by the peace process, the great majority of the Middle Eastern population is committed to honouring the religious traditions that have sprung from their region to enlighten the four corners of the world by living together in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect.

At the same time, the international community cannot fail to express its disquiet as agreements freely entered into seem to be taken lightly and disenchantment is allowed to spread among those in many quarters who had not only invested their political and diplomatic resources in the peace process, but had also placed their honest faith in its viability. To those around the world who remain attached to a just, lasting and comprehensive

peace in the Middle East it is simply unacceptable to contemplate a scenario in which mutual confidence is being eroded by episodes that are being perceived, at the very least, as an expression of lack of commitment to the peace process.

As was stressed by the Foreign Minister of Brazil, Mr. Luiz Felipe Lampreia in a recent statement,

> "The Brazilian Government considers that only through the continuation of the peace process in the Middle East and the renewal of mutual trust among the parties, in accordance with agreements that have already been signed, will it be possible to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, fulfilling the aspirations of all peoples and States concerned."

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Israeli Government's decision to carry out its plan of expansion in Jerusalem has aroused widespread concern in the international community. At present, when all sides concerned are making positive efforts to promote the further development of the peace process in the Middle East, the Israeli plan to unilaterally change the status quo of Jerusalem runs counter to these efforts and is bound to lead to the further complication of the situation in the Middle East region. We would like to express our concern about the development of this situation.

The Chinese Government has always believed that the settlement of the question of Jerusalem should be carried out through peaceful negotiations by all sides concerned, on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. We believe that the key to the settlement of the Middle East question lies in the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the principle of land for peace and the effective implementation of the agreements that have been reached between Israel and Arab countries.

At present, the Middle East peace process has come to a sensitive and crucial point. We appeal to all sides concerned to cherish the hard-won peaceful situation, strictly abide by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations with regard to Jerusalem and the Oslo agreements and cease all actions that may lead to the deterioration of the situation so that the Middle East peace process can emerge from the current deadlock as soon as possible and lead to the creation of the conditions necessary for an early, comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of the Middle East.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): The United States shares the concern about the developments in the Middle East that have brought us together today in this Chamber. Having worked intensively on behalf of a just, comprehensive and durable Arab-Israeli peace, we are all too aware of the consequences specific actions can have on the Middle East peace process, particularly where such actions involve an issue of permanent status.

One such issue, of course, is Jerusalem, which represents one of the most sensitive and emotionally charged issues in the Arab-Israeli peace process. This is one of the reasons that Israelis and Palestinians agreed in their Declaration of Principles in 1993 to defer this issue to those negotiations. Logic suggests and reality demands that no action be taken that would prejudge or prejudice an issue of such sensitivity.

It is in this context that we regret the announcement by the Government of Israel that it intends to create an "umbrella municipality" and to broaden the jurisdiction and planning boundaries of Jerusalem. The United States views Israel's decision as unhelpful at this delicate stage of negotiations. We reiterate that all parties should refrain from any unilateral action which could prejudge the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. In this connection, we welcome the statement by the Government of Israel that there will be no change in the political status of Jerusalem pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations.

It is no secret that the Middle East peace process has faced severe difficulties and has been mired in a prolonged stalemate for many months now. That is not remarkable; given the daunting challenge of bringing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace to this region, major challenges and even setbacks were expected. What is remarkable is that the parties have managed, through good times and bad, to keep alive the possibility of negotiating their differences rather than confronting one another.

We ask them now to recommit themselves once again to this process of negotiation and agreement. The United States has offered a fair and balanced set of ideas to break the stalemate. The Palestinians have said "yes" in principle to our ideas. We are now working with the Israelis to determine whether they can also accept what we have outlined so that both sides can begin the challenging task of negotiating the core issues of permanent status. Only negotiation can resolve these issues, and we call upon Israel — as well as the

Palestinians — not to take action that would make these negotiations harder to begin and to conclude.

Should the parties demonstrate their readiness to move forward on this basis, they will not find the Council lacking in either the will or the enthusiasm to help them along the way. In the end, of course, the Council cannot and should not interject itself into issues that the parties themselves have decided will be dealt with in face-to-face negotiations. It is up to the parties to return to those negotiations, and the sooner the better. But the Council can and should continue to offer the parties its unqualified support and encouragement as they seek to bring an end to the bitterness and pain that have divided them for so long.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland and Liechtenstein — align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is deeply concerned at the Israeli Government's endorsement of plans to extend the municipal authority of Jerusalem in a way which will alter the demographic balance in the Jerusalem area and tends to pre-empt the final status of occupied land. That concern is heightened by statements, attributed by the media to senior Israeli spokesmen, that the new arrangements are,

> "a basic change in Jerusalem's status which will be remembered as a turning point".

The European Union reaffirms the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and to the other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The European Union has consistently called upon Israel to recognize that the Convention applies de facto and *de jure* to those territories and to comply fully with its provisions. We have never accepted Israel's claim that the Convention does not apply to those territories. The Israeli Government, by initiating, encouraging and endorsing settlement activity in the occupied territories, is in violation of that Convention.

The extension of the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem municipal authority to settlements to the east and north of Jerusalem tends to pre-empt final status negotiations and contravenes the spirit of the Madrid and Oslo accords.

The European Union reaffirms its policy on the status of Jerusalem. East Jerusalem is subject to the principles set out in Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, notably, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and is therefore not under Israeli sovereignty. We believe that the final status of Jerusalem should be determined in final status talks. Neither side should take actions which seek to pre-empt this.

The European Union stresses that the current opportunity for progress on the Palestinian track must not be lost. The Union strongly supports the efforts of the United States to gain the agreement of the parties to a package of ideas which, if accepted, would open the way to implementation of existing agreements and the relaunch of final status talks. In that context, the European Union calls on Israel to recognize the right of the Palestinians to exercise self-determination, without excluding the option of a State. At the same time, it calls upon the Palestinian people to reaffirm their commitment to the legitimate right of Israel to live within safe, recognized borders.

It is all the more important at this juncture in the peace process to avoid unhelpful unilateral actions likely to arouse suspicion and put further obstacles in the way of peace.

Mr. Owada (Japan): Japan is deeply concerned about the present situation in the Middle East. In the face of a total lack of substantive progress in the peace process since the beginning of 1997, the sense of frustration which has come to prevail in the entire region is now mounting to a dangerous level.

On 3 December of last year, my delegation stated in the General Assembly debate on the situation in the Middle East,

> "Looking at these worrying developments, Japan is profoundly disturbed by the serious setback with which the Madrid process, launched in 1991 amid the hope of the international community, and with its blessing, is being threatened. The danger will be real if the present precarious situation surrounding the Palestinian track is not adequately addressed. The impasse in the peace process, not only on the Palestinian track but on all the tracks, could reduce to naught the precious mutual trust that has been built by the assiduous

> efforts of the parties involved over the years." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings, 60th meeting, p. 24*]

My delegation has to state with great regret that this danger is now becoming real. The recent decision taken by the Government of Israel to approve the plan to strengthen Jerusalem by extending its municipal boundaries should be looked at in the light of this background. It is true that the Government of Israel contends that the plan to strengthen Jerusalem is non-political in nature, deals only with municipal and administrative issues and does not contradict in any way the provisions of the peace process as achieved in the agreement signed between the parties, to which Israel strictly adheres.

However, apart from the fundamental point that this position is based on a unilateral interpretation of a unilateral action, which other parties may not accept, it misses one essential aspect of the whole present crisis. What concerns us in the international community is that this unilateral action could lead to a crisis of confidence and reduce to naught the precious mutual trust that has been built by the serious efforts of the parties involved over the years, thus risking the destruction of the very basis on which the peace process entirely depends.

Faced with this new, controversial development brought about by a unilateral action by the Government of Israel, the Government of Japan had to express its concern in the form of an official statement by the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 23 June 1998. That statement contains the following two essential messages: first, that the Government of Japan, having ardently and repeatedly called upon both the Israelis and the Palestinians to engage in constructive efforts to facilitate the peace process, expresses its regret over this decision taken by the Government of Israel, as it is expected to cast a negative effect on the fragile peace process; and secondly, that the Government of Japan will keep a close watch, with great attention, on how the Government of Israel is going to deal with the implementation of this decision.

The Government of Japan has consistently been calling upon the Government of Israel not to take unilateral action that could irreparably poison the atmosphere of mutual trust, which is so essential to progress in the peace process. The previous decision of the Government of Israel, taken last year, to construct settlements in Jebel Abu Ghneim, or Har Homa, in East Jerusalem, was just such an example of unwise provocation. We in Japan deeply regret that another such example is now added in the form of an extension of Jerusalem's municipal authority.

The repeated call of the Government of Japan on Israel has been based on its firm conviction that mutual trust among the parties directly involved is an indispensable premise for any substantive progress in the peace process. In the absence of an essential level of trust between the parties involved, no compromise proposal, however balanced and reasonable it may be, can be expected to command acceptance by both parties.

This is the primary reason that has prompted Japan to persistently call for maximum self-restraint by all parties concerned. Unfortunately, there are too many examples of this kind in the history of this troubled region, where failure to exercise self-restraint led to the deterioration of the situation through a loss of mutual confidence. It is of primary importance that the parties concerned summon their courage and wisdom to take concrete steps to implement the commitments they have already made in Madrid, in Oslo and thereafter.

It is undeniable that the final key to success in the peace process lies with the parties themselves. As my delegation stated in the formal meeting of the Security Council on 5 March 1997 on the situation in the occupied Arab territories,

> "There is a very real danger that the Israeli decision could lead to a crisis ... in which the erosion of the process of peace might result. If that should take place, the resulting [loss of mutual confidence] could destroy the very structure for peace in the Middle East, a structure so assiduously built up over the years since Camp David, Madrid and Oslo." *[S/PV.3745, p. 16]*

While this remark was made in the context of a controversy surrounding the construction of a new settlement in West Jerusalem, there is a striking similarity between the situation described in that statement and the present situation. It is all the more regrettable that my delegation has to repeat these same words today after more than one year has elapsed, while in the meantime the atmosphere surrounding the parties, in terms of their mutual trust and confidence, has further been deteriorated and poisoned.

The delegation of Japan believes that the open debate on the situation in the Middle East being held

today serves a useful purpose to the extent that the grave concern of the international community over the present developments surrounding the Palestinian situation has to register unequivocally in the minds of the parties involved. At the same time, however, we in the international community have to be on our guard not to let the present precarious situation deteriorate into one which could get out of our control.

Whatever we do in the context of the United Nations should be geared towards promoting and expediting the peace process in the Middle East. Our reaction to the situation would have to be carefully weighed from the viewpoint of what is going to be constructive for the peace process, as against what is not going to be constructive. In taking action in the United Nations, we should be guided by the yardstick as to whether the action is conducive to achieving our goal in the Middle East peace process.

It is my sincere wish that a new, favourable turn of events in the present situation in the Middle East, to be realized on the basis only of a common conviction of the parties involved that peace is indispensable to the survival of all the nations in the region, will come to prevail through mutual concessions and reciprocal sacrifices. It is high time that each of the parties realized that a sustainable peace in an environment of security can be built only on the basis of a common spirit of reconciliation and coexistence.

Japan will be happy to actively participate in any effort to achieve this goal in a revitalized peace process.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Peace is a priceless commodity. For a region of the world that has hardly known any meaningful peace for so long, any action that is likely to raise questions, no matter how good the intentions might be, should be avoided at all costs in the interest of peace. This is why my delegation cannot but express concern over the recent developments aimed at extending the municipal boundaries of the Holy City of Jerusalem, Al-Quds Al-Sharif. In our view, the present stage of the peace process, which is in a state of near-paralysis, has already given rise to feelings of frustration and fatigue. In this context, it would be ill-advised to do anything that would complicate matters unnecessarily and increase tension in an already volatile situation. We do not wish to see anything that could derail the peace process.

Besides, the Holy City of Jerusalem, we must remember, is home to all the three revealed religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — and therefore it should be transformed not into a theatre of conflict, but into a terrain for cooperation. Furthermore, we would have thought that the question of Jerusalem was scheduled for discussion at the permanent status/final status negotiations, in which case conventional wisdom dictates restraint and respite until then, in accordance with the Oslo accords.

In these difficult times, we should all be looking for practical ways to reactivate the peace process, as there appears to be no credible alternative to the Oslo accords. The latter constitute a reasonable *modus vivendi* for Israelis and Palestinians, in particular, because both sides need to live in peace alongside each other. Sacrifices and concessions had to be made to get to where we are today, although we still have a long way to go. That was why it was called the "peace of the brave".

The situation having come this far, my delegation believes that there should be no turning back. No stone should be left unturned in the quest for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. That is why we support the peace process. It cannot be gainsaid that it has been deadlocked for quite sometime now, but my delegation has faith in the ability of the United States, in its indefatigable efforts as the principal peace-broker, to give fresh impetus to the process — with the support, of course, of the parties concerned.

Let us give peace a chance.

Mr. Mahugu (Kenya): In 1993, the international community was hopeful that, following the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements — in the context of the Oslo accords — the elusive goal of peace in the Middle East seemed more and more attainable. These hopes were first tested, then strained and finally dashed, following acts that violated the letter and spirit of the accords. Specifically, the illegal construction policy in Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem, an issue which would be negotiated in the final stage of the Oslo accords, brought the entire peace process to its knees. In the tense and volatile environment that now prevails in the Middle East, recent pronouncements and the proposed construction of new settlements by Israel in Jerusalem have undermined not only the foundation, but the legitimacy of the whole Middle East peace process, pushing the actors close to the brink of armed conflict. These developments are of such great concern to the international community that the Security Council, which is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace

and security, must address the crisis in a cogent, direct and unemotional way.

I recall that, when the issue of the illegal construction of settlements in East Jerusalem came up in the Security Council last year, my delegation stated that Kenya had been a consistent advocate for peace and supported an honest and constructive dialogue between Israel and Palestine. We expressed deep concern about the threats to ongoing negotiations and called on all the parties to refrain from any activities that had the potential to irretrievably harm the peace process. We expressed the hope then, as we do again now, that cool minds and calm action would characterize the response of the Palestinians, Israelis and the international community. We make that fervent appeal again today, conscious of the unimaginable consequences to peace and security should any unilateral decisions to change the status and demographic composition of Jerusalem be made. Any unilateral decisions to change the status of Jerusalem are not only unacceptable, but also illegal.

All nations must strictly adhere to the resolutions of the Security Council. Current Israeli settlement policy is contrary to international law, Council resolutions and agreements already in place between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We call on all the parties to respect this Council's resolutions on the status of Jerusalem in particular, and the Middle East in general. The question of the final status of Jerusalem must be decided through negotiations by the parties directly involved. The international community cannot allow the establishment of new facts on the ground that would prejudge final status negotiations.

Kenya believed the commitment made by both parties last year that they were determined to advance the peace process. We are disappointed that this commitment has not been met. We are disappointed that words have not matched action. Just as we were requested to exhibit restraint and trust, so do we now request both parties to exhibit the same. They must reactivate their political will, stand brave in the midst of adversity, and resolve their differences through dialogue. In this context, we strongly encourage the facilitators of the peace process not to diminish their zeal or ease in their resolve and energy to mediate a mutually acceptable solution to the whole problem of the Middle East, and specifically the Palestinian question, at the heart of which lies the policy of land for peace.

Kenya remains determined to continue supporting the parties in their search for durable, comprehensive, just and lasting peace. We therefore call for all the parties to exercise maximum restraint and urge them to resume discussions on the issue before us, because negotiations remain the only viable and peaceful option to resolve the crisis.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): France's position on the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and on the peace process, is well known. We share that position with the members of the European Union and with many other States that associate themselves with our statements. We believe, in accordance with the almost identical terms of six Council resolutions, that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel that have altered or purported to alter the character and status of Jerusalem are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith.

We have supported the peace process since its inception and have on several occasions — including recently, with our European partners — reaffirmed our support for the efforts of the United States to secure the agreement of the parties on proposals that we regard as reasonable. These positions are well known, and we will therefore merely recall them.

Too frequently we hear that the peace process is going through a crucial stage and that we should continue to be patient. Patience is warranted and, indeed, essential, when a situation is developing in the right direction. We would be the first to remind all the parties concerned that changes cannot be achieved in one day, or even in a year, that we must allow time for attitudes to evolve and that we must move in stages, each stage being well established so as to ensure the success of the next. That is what is generally called a process.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing a reverse trend: there has been no response to the proposals made by the United States several months ago, while at the same time an increasing number of decisions have been taken that have created *faits accomplis*. The expulsions and demolitions taking place in Jerusalem are causing humiliation, despondency and anger. This policy seems to arise out of a movement aimed at creating an irreversible situation in Jerusalem that in the long term would strip the question of the status of the city of any real meaning. We are meeting today because of a new decision that, if it were implemented, would amount to accepting a plan altering the boundaries of the city and

creating an expanded municipal structure. Inasmuch as that new structure would include West Bank settlements close to Jerusalem, it would clearly alter the existing status quo. Such an action would run counter to the spirit and letter of the agreements signed between the parties. It would be a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It would disregard the decisions of the Security Council. We therefore appeal to the Israeli authorities to renounce this approach.

The city of Jerusalem is a special and sacred place for three major religions. That is why, in 1947, the decision was taken to give Jerusalem an international status. Today, as then, only agreement between the parties can yield a solution that is acceptable to the international community. The chance for a lasting peace hinges on that agreement.

The deadlock in the peace process is profoundly disappointing and saddening to all those who admired the courage and vision of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders who committed themselves to it. But above and beyond our disappointment, it is the danger that this deadlock poses for regional stability that concerns us.

Israel's security is a legitimate concern, recognized by the international community and by the Palestinians. In this regard, the latter have taken brave measures which should be continued. But the only genuine security, as France itself knows, lies in the resolve of peoples and their leaders to choose coexistence and cooperation. Fortunately, Israel's right to live within secure and recognized borders is now well established. But the choice must be made once and for all in favour of discussions in good faith, rather than tensions. We therefore call once again for the Israeli leaders to choose negotiation, and we encourage those who are playing a special role in the peace process to pursue their efforts without respite.

We are ready to consider any decision whereby the Security Council, in accordance with its responsibilities, would place on record its concern in the light of the Israeli decisions relating to the boundaries of the municipality of Jerusalem and would also make a strong appeal to the parties to allow the peace process in the Middle East to break out of its deadlock. We fervently hope that it will be possible to secure consensus on such a decision, and we are ready to work to that end.

Mr. Essonghé (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): We are meeting once again to discuss a question that has already been the subject of numerous debates in both the General Assembly and the Security Council. The expectations raised by these discussions have so far proved illusory, given the striking lack of progress in normalizing the situation in the Middle East. On the contrary, like causes produce like effects, and we are now witnessing yet another increase in tension between the parties in that region of the world.

Together with the rest of the international community, we are worried by the precarious nature of the current situation in the light of recent developments. The Madrid agreements of 1991 and all the meetings that followed them, especially those in Oslo, made it possible to create an ideal framework in which to build peace in that part of the world. We believed that such a framework would help resolve all the questions that were a major obstacle to any degree of progress in the peace talks between the parties. Now, however, we are bound to note that there has been a general reverse in the peace process. However, there is no solution but to work through the mechanism to achieve a comprehensive peace.

That is why all the parties should, above all, apply themselves to fulfilling their obligations and avoid taking any measure likely to create barriers to the implementation of the peace agreements. The loss of ground in the peace process clearly demonstrates that the international community should become more involved in the search for a settlement to this grave crisis. In this respect, we are convinced that, given the current deadlock, the United Nations has major political role to play in that part of the world.

Our country, Gabon, long ago embraced the principle of dialogue. We believe that only dialogue will enable the parties to eliminate the remaining areas where there is lack of understanding between them. The international community should work towards this end.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): The Security Council is meeting today to discuss the situation in the occupied Arab territories and to reaffirm its support for the continuation of the peace process on the basis of agreements reached thus far. We share the concern, frustration and disappointment of the international community over the current stalemate in the peace process and over the fact that the people of the Middle East, specifically the Palestinian people, are still being denied the opportunity to live in peace, security and prosperity.

Many times in recent history it seemed that no peace could be agreed upon in the Middle East, that wars, violence and fear were predestined for the people of the region. However, the peace process launched in Madrid and Oslo proved that that was not the case. For the first time since 1948 there was a realistic opportunity for and possibility of peace. What it took was for the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to show political will and wisdom, responsibility and courage. Firm foundations for peace were laid down with those agreements, and the subsequent efforts created a legitimate expectation that the peace process would become irreversible.

We still believe that the peace process must be made irreversible. It is up to the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to live up to their responsibilities and commitments to their own people and to continue taking further steps towards peace and security for the benefit and well-being of the people in the Middle East. Therefore the present obstacles to the peace process need to be overcome so that the negotiations on the final status can begin as soon as possible.

The issue of the settlements in the occupied territories has become a central obstacle to the whole Middle East peace process. There is a wide degree of consensus throughout the international community that these settlement activities are illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is applicable in the present situation. These activities include settlements, activities for enlarging settlement boundaries and establishing the "umbrella municipality", and the confiscation of Palestinian land in East Jerusalem. Settlement activities and other activities and plans which alter the demographic balance in the Jerusalem area represent obstacles to the peace process.

Jerusalem is not only a city, and it is not just a Holy City. Jerusalem is a Holy City for three religions. That is why the question of its status is so emotional and potentially so explosive, and that is why Jerusalem is one of the most sensitive and contentious issues in Israeli-Palestinian relations. The question of Jerusalem should be resolved in negotiations between the two parties themselves. Until then, the status established by Security Council resolution 242 (1967) continues to apply to all occupied territories, including Jerusalem. All sides should refrain from any action that could have negative implications for the peace process.

We trust the mediation efforts of the co-sponsors of the peace process, especially those of the United States. Their determination and commitment to success give us hope that the difficulties will be overcome and that the next, and most essential, stage of negotiations leading to the final status talks will begin. The right of the Palestinians to self-determination, with all the implications of that right, and the right of Israel to live within safe borders will have to be fully recognized and articulated in specific arrangements.

No credible alternative exists to the peace process in the Middle East. The commitments made by Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Madrid and Oslo, which have to be fully implemented, constitute a historic opportunity to reach a just and lasting peace in the region, which has been deprived of this for such a long time.

Mr. Dahlgren (Sweden): Let me first state that Sweden fully associates itself with the statement made earlier today by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

The Government of Sweden deplores the recent decision by the Israeli Government to extend the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem municipal authority. That decision constitutes yet another in a succession of measures by Israel to change the demographics of Jerusalem and to strengthen the position of the occupying Power, such as the demolition of houses in the Old City of Jerusalem and the decision to construct new housing in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area.

It is the long-standing position of my Government that all Israeli settlements in the occupied territory are illegal under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This includes settlements in East Jerusalem. We believe that the Israeli settlement policy endangers the Middle East peace process in its entirety and that it violates the letter and spirit of the Declaration of Principles.

In our view, settlement activities establish facts on the ground which prejudge the final status negotiations. Actions which change the status of Jerusalem ahead of such negotiations cannot be tolerated. Our firm opinion is that the Israeli Government must rescind all such decisions, including the latest action, which is the reason for today's debate.

The Government of Sweden urges Israel to accept — as the Palestinians have already done — the American proposals on a further withdrawal from areas on the West Bank. We believe that this is at present the only way to regain the dynamics of the peace process and to resume final status negotiations. Back in 1993, the Government

of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) embarked on a historic negotiating process that should lead to a permanent settlement by 4 May 1999, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Israel and the PLO then agreed that true and lasting security for the two peoples can be achieved only through a political process, at the negotiating table.

Only such a negotiating process can pave the way for a comprehensive and just settlement that can lead to lasting peace in the Middle East.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Portugal.

Portugal fully subscribes to the statement made by the presidency of the European Union.

The successful conclusion of the Hebron Protocol had led us to believe that Israel and the Palestinians would, at this moment, be focusing on the timely implementation of all the agreements they had already reached and would by now be starting talks on the final status.

However, since then, the peace process has remained at a stalemate. That is why both the Council and the General Assembly, each according to its own responsibilities, are being called from time to time to deal with elements of disturbance that could jeopardize the peace process and disrupt international peace and security.

We would have expected to see the parties seated around the table, negotiating directly in a good atmosphere, enabling them to tackle the crucial issues which remain to be addressed.

But unhelpful unilateral actions are creating serious obstacles to the peace process. I am referring in particular to the recent endorsement by the Government of Israel of plans to extend the municipal authority of Jerusalem in a way that will alter the status quo of the city and prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations.

We believe that this decision constitutes a violation of the numerous resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. We also believe that such a measure contravenes the terms of reference of the peace process and the spirit of the Oslo accords. Furthermore, this decision follows a succession of unacceptable actions by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian population in Jerusalem. Those actions violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies de facto and de jure to the occupied territories, including Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, these measures not only increase the frustration felt by all those who have been supporting the peace process, but they also encourage those forces on both sides which have been directly or indirectly opposing peace. This will also further complicate the task of those engaged in mediating or assisting the parties in the peace process in order to bring them together and help them overcome their differences.

Such measures can only undermine the indispensable trust and confidence that the parties must build up in order to achieve a just, comprehensive and longstanding political settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and to establish a new relationship based on cooperation from which all countries and peoples of the region will benefit.

In this regard, we appeal to the Israeli authorities to reconsider these decisions on the municipality of Jerusalem and to refrain from translating them into any concrete action, since this would only further derail the peace talks. We also appeal to the Israeli Government to accept, as quickly as possible, the current United States initiative, so that the peace process can resume.

Portugal firmly believes that there is no alternative to the peace process in the Middle East. The Council must urge the parties to live up to their commitments and to comply with their obligations under international law and the agreements they have reached.

In this context, my delegation is ready to consider, at an appropriate time, further action by the Council on this issue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Sudan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June. Our thanks go also to the representative of Kenya for the able way in which he presided over the work of the Council last month.

I have the honour of addressing the Council on behalf of the Group of Arab States at the United Nations, as current Chairman of that group.

We sincerely thank you, Mr. President, for your efforts and for the consultations you have led in response to the request to convene an emergency formal meeting of the Council to consider the recent decision by the Government of Israel, the occupying Power, to expand the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem. Your efforts testify to your determination to shoulder your responsibilities as President of the Council and do credit to the Council's credibility and transparency. I also thank the other members of the Council for their similar interest and for agreeing to the convening of this meeting.

Once again the Security Council is meeting, this time to consider the serious measure adopted by the Government of Israel on 21 June 1998, aimed at expanding the municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem to include surrounding settlements and vast tracts of the territory of the West Bank. That decision came in the context of expanding Israeli sovereignty over occupied Palestinian territories by distorting the character of Holy Jerusalem and changing its status as a city that is sacred to the three major monotheistic religions, and by tightening Israel's hegemony over the city, eradicating its Arab character and changing its nature and demographic composition.

The relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council — in particular Council resolution 252 (1968), which considers such Israeli measures regarding Jerusalem to be null and void — reaffirm the special status of Jerusalem and the applicability to it of provisions relating to the rest of the occupied Arab territories. The latest measure is part of a series of grave, flagrant violations by the Government of Israel of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

What is new and interesting about this measure is that it is not only a flagrant violation of international law and international legitimacy, but also the very embodiment of Israeli Government actions that openly and flagrantly violate the Madrid and Oslo peace agreements with the aim of pre-empting their final outcome. It is also a clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and the Hague Rules of 1907, and constitutes aggression against and a challenge to the legitimacy of the international community. Israel has always claimed to be interested in peace, but in fact does nothing but carry out measures that obviously run counter to peace and that can only perpetuate the conflict in the region.

Arab and Islamic countries, along with other concerned international parties, have followed with grave concern and deep anxiety this series of Israeli Government violations aimed at imposing a fait accompli in the occupied Palestinian territories. We reiterate our condemnation of the latest Israeli decision not only as an obstacle to peace, but also as a step intended to destroy the entire peace process, and as a measure that ignores the rights and feelings of all Muslims and Christians around the world.

Having been frustrated and discouraged, our Palestinian brethren have turned to the Security Council. They know that Jerusalem has a very special status and a solid international position in the United Nations, in the General Assembly and in the Security Council. Suffice it to say that the Council has adopted 16 resolutions whose form and content constitute the proper legal framework for the city of Jerusalem.

We appreciate the position taken by the Secretary-General on the latest Israeli Government decision with regard to Jerusalem. This position is in line with the view expressed in a statement by the League of Arab States, over which my Government has the honour of presiding this month, at the emergency meeting held on 25 June 1998. That statement, which was issued at that meeting and which has been circulated as an official document of the Security Council, affirms that the new Israeli decision is the latest in a series of Israeli violations of international law and an act of aggression by Israel against international legitimacy, an act that reeks of flagrant racism and violates the territory and the rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The statement calls upon the United States of America, as a sponsor of the peace process, to do what it must to compel Israel to abide by its commitments under the Madrid process. It expresses appreciation of the position taken by the Russian Federation, calling upon it, as a sponsor of the peace process, along with the European Union and all other concerned parties, to take a firm position on these Israeli practices, which ignore and violate the feelings and rights of all Muslims and Christians throughout the world.

The Council should understand that the Israeli decision to expand the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem will have grave repercussions for the peace process, exposing it to destruction and taking the entire region to

the edge of the precipice. Therefore, the Council should express the strongest condemnation of the decision taken by the Israeli Government, declare that decision to expand the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem null and void, and demand that Israel rescind it. The Council should also call on Israel to affirm its commitment to its legal responsibility in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 1949, whose provisions apply to all lands occupied by Israel, including Jerusalem. Any action taken by the Council which does not reaffirm these positions of principle would cause the Council's credibility and its shouldering of its responsibility under the Charter to be shaken, and would impute to the Council a double standard. Thus it would send the wrong message to the Israeli Government, a message that would encourage it to continue to endanger the peace process and to drive the entire region to the brink of explosion.

On behalf of the Group of Arab States at the United Nations, I request the Security Council to adopt the draft resolution before it.

The President: I thank the representative of the Sudan for the kind words he addressed to me, to my predecessor and to the Security Council.

The next speaker is the representative of the United Arab Emirates. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Samhan Al-Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates)(*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my pleasure to express my thanks and appreciation to you, Sir, for your tireless efforts upon your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I wish to convey the same sentiment to your predecessor, the representative of Kenya.

The Security Council meets today to consider the decision made by the Israeli cabinet on 21 June 1998, pertaining to the expansion of the municipal borders of the city of Jerusalem to include neighbouring settlements and other illegal West Bank settlements. The measure aims at annexing more occupied Palestinian and Arab land. It aims at changing the demographic composition as well as the institutional and legal makeup of this historic Holy Arab City by uniting it geographically through a new network of settlements and complicated roads, the ultimate aim being to isolate it from the other cities and villages of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the other Arab occupied regions.

This is a provocation not only to the Palestinian people, but indeed a provocation to all Arab and Islamic peoples. It is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, the resolutions concerning international legitimacy, the basic principles of the peace process and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

It is therefore a rejected measure. It will not give the Israeli Government a legitimate or legal right to lay its hands on any part of these lands, particularly since the international community has condemned such Israeli practices in many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, all of which provide that the administrative and legislative measures taken by the Israeli Government to change the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem are null and void and devoid of any legal merit.

This Israeli decision, which coincides with the newly declared direction to be taken by the Israeli Prime Minister of calling for the convening of a second peace conference in Madrid, and the political and legal falsehoods in the statement of the Permanent Representative of Israel made today before the Security Council, all clearly reveal the aggressive tactics of the Israeli Government based on expansion and prevarication with regard to its legal and political commitments in accordance with the peace agreement it has signed.

It also explains the continuing obstacles placed by Israel to the resumption of negotiations on the various tracks since taking power. It explains Israel's persistence in conducting a relentless campaign of colonialist settler measures, particularly in Jerusalem, among which was the launching of the largest colonial settlement in Jebel Abu Ghneim. It explains many other measures, such as the arming of its settlers in order to promote their participation in the policy of oppression, the demolition of homes, the confiscation of lands, the encirclement of Arab inhabitants, the suffocation of their movements and the withdrawal of their identification cards.

All these measures aim at annexing the eastern part of Jerusalem. It is a preparation for gradual illegal deportation of Palestinian Arabs, the original inhabitants of this Holy City, in order to replace them with tens of thousands of new settlers from all parts of the world. All these measures have grave consequences which will lead to increased suffering among the Palestinian people and to an escalation of violence and tension in the region, as well as the resultant endangerment of international and regional peace and security.

The State of the United Arab Emirates, while condemning all these Israeli violations, reaffirms its full support for the demands of the Palestinian people. We support their rejection of all Israeli colonialist settler policies on Palestinian land, particularly the city of Jerusalem. We believe that all such violations and measures taken in a premeditated fashion by the Israeli Government, in addition to the increasing successive obstacles facing the efforts for resumption of negotiations, whether on the Palestinian or Syrian and Lebanese tracks, are a clear attempt by Israel to shirk its commitments. The international community must therefore unanimously hold Israel fully responsible for the grave repercussions resulting from its violations.

Despite the positive efforts undertaken by the international community, as well as by the two sponsors of the peace process, especially the United States and the European Union, to find an objective and pragmatic solution to push the peace process forward on the basis of international legitimacy, we regret to find that the Israeli Government deliberately hampers all such efforts, flouting all its legal, political and moral commitments, without having to shoulder any responsibilities for the consequences of such aggressive behaviour.

We therefore express the hope that these States will continue to make further efforts by demanding that Israel renounce these positions which do not respect its commitments. We also call on the Security Council today to condemn such Israeli violations. We call on the Security Council to take a firm position, compelling the Israeli Government to renounce its latest decision as well as all previous colonialist settler measures. We call for the immediate cessation of the building and expansion of Israeli settlements and the dismantling of current settlements, particularly in Jerusalem.

We believe that only this will open the way to renewed efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East as a whole. This alone will guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and its right to self-determination and to the establishment of its independent State on its national territory in Palestine. This would fulfil the aspirations of the peoples and the States of the region for stability, security and peace.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Arab Emirates for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Algeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Baali (Algeria)(*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to convey to you, Sir, the great pleasure it gives me to see you presiding over the Security Council with such skill and competence and in a manner that commands our respect and admiration.

I should also like to pay a well-deserved tribute to the representative of Kenya, Mr. Mahugu, who succeeded in conducting the work of the Council with skill and effectiveness in a particularly busy month.

Finally, I would like to express our distress and our sorrow at the sudden death of Maître Alioune Blondin Beye, a most eminent son of Africa, who tirelessly pursued his mediation efforts in Angola. We wish to take this opportunity to extend our sincere condolences to his family, to his country — Mali — and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. We express the hope that the cause of peace and reconciliation to which he so fervently devoted himself will be realized.

My delegation asked to participate in the work of this urgent meeting of the Security Council in order to express Algeria's position concerning the threats to peace and security that have multiplied in the Middle East region since the series of unilateral and illegal steps taken by Israel in the occupied territories, particularly in occupied Al-Quds.

In fact, over the space of several weeks now Israel has taken a series of decisions to extend, expand and tighten its grip over the territories that it occupies. The occupying Power has decided to pursue its policy of settlement and settlement enlargement. This is demonstrated by the project for the new Jewish settlement at Jebel Abu Ghneim; the creation of a civil guard composed of Jewish settlers in the occupied territories; the transformation of the illegal status of the Ariel settlement in order to make it a fully separate town and thereby exempt it from the final status negotiations; and, lastly the extension of the boundaries of the city of Al-Quds to areas within the occupied territories in order to encompass a number of Jewish settlements situated to the east of the Holy City.

The measures taken by Israel to restart its settlement process are in outright defiance of international law and the will of the international community. Israel's decision

to expand the municipal boundaries of Al-Quds is proof of this policy of provocation, because it conflicts with the rudimentary rules of international law, ignores the resolutions adopted within the context of international law, contravenes the principles of the Middle East peace process and violates the spirit and letter of the Oslo accords.

This decision is first and foremost in conflict with international law because it knowingly disregards a whole set of international treaties, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. That Convention prohibits the imposition by occupying Powers of their administrative jurisdictions on territories under their domination, the transfer of civilian populations to those territories and any disruption of the composition of their populations. This is precisely what has been constantly done, and is still being done, by Israel in Al-Quds al-Sharif.

This decision is also deliberately contemptuous of resolutions of international legality, first and foremost among which are those of the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Security Council has adopted many binding resolutions on the subject of the city of Al-Quds, all of which have remained unimplemented. These include resolutions 252 (1968), 476 (1980) and 478 (1980), all of which define Al-Quds al-Sharif as an occupied city, forbid the occupying Power from changing the geographic, demographic or urban configuration of the city and regard any measure that is contrary to these provisions as null and void and as something that should be revoked.

Moreover, Israel's decision is not in keeping with the basic principles of the peace process. It contravenes the principle of land for peace, which is the keystone of the peace process on which the participation of Arab countries in the Madrid Conference of 1991 was based. It is also very clearly spelt out in the letters of invitation that the sponsors of the process sent to all the parties, including the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people.

Lastly, Israel's decision to expand the municipal boundaries of occupied Jerusalem — along with other decisions that affect the Holy City — is a flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Oslo accords signed between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. Those accords decided that the consideration of the question of Al-Quds al-Sharif would be deferred to the final phase of the peace negotiations. This was done, however, on the condition that the two parties would undertake to maintain the status quo of the city and refrain from any decision or unilateral measures that would result in a change in the legal status of the city or its demographic and geographic character.

The Israeli measure is therefore contrary to that commitment and is clearly a deliberate act on the part of the Israeli administration aimed at anticipating events and piling up *faits accomplis* in order to be able to exercise the necessary pressure on the Palestinian party during the last stage of the negotiations on the final status of Al-Quds.

The provocative actions that Israel continues to undertake in the region of the Middle East in general, and in Al-Quds al-Sharif in particular, is undoubtedly an outright threat to international peace and security. The climate of tension that they create in the region could cause the situation to degenerate at any stage into a fresh confrontation that would sweep away all peace efforts.

The persistence of the Israeli administration in defying the will of the international community and ignoring resolutions — particularly those adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council — is simply an unacceptable act of defiance towards the international community and very clearly undermines the entire foundation for action of the United Nations.

In addressing the Security Council, the highest international forum responsible for safeguarding international peace and security, the Arab Group expects that the Council will fulfil its responsibilities to induce Israel to cease its expansionist projects in the occupied Palestinian territories, abandon its plans to extend the municipal boundaries of Al-Quds al-Sharif to the Jewish settlements that surround it and conform to the rules of international law that incontestably prohibit any alteration of the demographic and geographic composition of the occupied city. In fact, any leniency on the part of the Council will only lead to extremism and increasing stubbornness on the part of the Israeli Administration in the pursuit of its policy that is contrary to peace and to the letter of the law. The Council is therefore called upon today to take a firm and clear-cut position vis-à-vis these Israeli acts of provocation and to shoulder its responsibilities fully.

The Arab Group also makes an especially urgent appeal to the two sponsors of the Middle East peace process — the United States and the Russian Federation — to act with resolve to salvage the peace process and put it back on track.

The Arab countries have made a strategic choice in favour of peace. They remain convinced that the only way to resolve the Middle East problem once and for all lies in the establishment of comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, on the basis of the principle of land for peace and guaranteeing the right of the Palestinian people to create its own independent State on Palestinian territory, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for his kind words addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Morocco. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, allow me once again to express my great pleasure at seeing you presiding over the work of our Council.

Today we are meeting once again here in the Security Council to discuss a highly sensitive and highly painful issue, that of the destiny of the city of Al-Quds. Indeed, the recent decision of the Israeli Government to expand the municipal authority of Al-Quds is yet another step in a series of challenges that Israeli officials have placed before the international community.

The "umbrella authority" measure is the latest in this series. Reiterating its contempt for United Nations resolutions that consider the establishment of settlements in Al-Quds and in the other occupied territories as an illegal act and that emphasize that all measures aimed at changing the geographic and demographic nature of this Holy City are null and void, the Israeli Government is yet again, unfortunately, providing us with proof of its arrogance and its obvious intention not to respect the official commitments it has undertaken.

As His Majesty King Hassan II has emphasized, the Israeli Government wishes to create a new school of international law by which any new Government can purely and simply renounce the commitments undertaken by the preceding Government. That school would unfortunately be a school of annihilation rather than one of existence. Indeed, what the Israeli officials have not wanted to understand is that by signing the Oslo agreements, their country in fact had acted for the first time as a State recognized by the Arab States. And in signing these agreements sponsored by two super-Powers, the country was building a bridge of confidence and respect with the international community. What the Israeli officials did not want to understand either is that what has been destroyed can, unfortunately, be reconstructed only with a thousand times the effort and a thousand times the sacrifices. But the question that everyone is asking is whether we can still do that.

The Israeli plan aimed at establishing an irreversible situation in Al-Quds and at surrounding the Arab populations is a flagrant contradiction of the relevant Security Council resolutions and of international legality, which forbid changes in the legal status and demographic and geographic composition of Al-Quds. The intransigence of the present Israeli Government has led to a halt in the peace process on all of its tracks. It has thus encouraged the establishment of new settlements in the occupied Arab territories, and particularly in Al-Quds, and the decision to dig a tunnel under Haram al-Sharif, an action which, as the Council will recall, gave rise to very painful events.

However, the cruelties and humiliations continue. As the Council can see, the latest Israeli decision is not an isolated action but rather the result of a long-term strategy aimed at totally changing this Holy City, whose heritage includes the Al Aqsa Mosque, the first of the two kiblahs and the third holiest place for Muslims and the cradle of all the revealed religions.

The Council can easily imagine the perverse effects the latest Israeli decision will have on what we call the peace process, a process that, unfortunately, now exists in name only.

Morocco, which has always advocated a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, can only condemn most severely the Israeli decision regarding the extension of the municipal authority of Al-Quds. Morocco, whose sovereign, as you know, is the Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, solemnly affirms that there can be no genuine peace without Al-Quds. The Muslim community throughout the world will allow neither the occupation nor the encirclement of that city, which is the symbol and the centre of our revealed religions.

Morocco strongly reaffirms its opposition to this new act of aggression, which, unfortunately, strengthens all of those who had thought that no genuine peace with Israel was possible. Israel has succeeded in reviving an atmosphere of suspicion that we thought had been buried for ever. As everyone knows, including Israel, we were among those who had contributed to recreating the

climate of confidence. But, unfortunately, all of that has been buried.

The international community has launched numerous appeals for Israel to put an end to its acts of provocation, but in vain. The innumerable resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly continue to be treated with utter contempt by Israel. Some see here the confirmation of a policy that no one wished publicly to acknowledge, and we are still among those who believe that the Security Council will not allow its impartiality or sense of justice to become suspect.

Israel's impunity up to now, regrettably, has certainly encouraged it along that path. The Muslim community believes that the questions of Palestine and Al-Quds are priority questions and, faithful to this position of principle, wishes to emphasize the need for the return of the Holy City to Palestinian sovereignty in order to help bring about a just and lasting settlement to the Palestinian problem.

The Muslim community has reaffirmed on numerous occasions that this Holy City was an integral part of the territories occupied in 1967 and has recalled in this connection the relevant resolutions demanding that its geographic and demographic nature remain unchanged. There is no room for any interpretation or evaluation.

We hope that the Security Council will see fit to launch an appeal, and we hope that this will be the last time, calling to order the Israeli officials by reminding them of their international obligations.

At this point, when contempt, hatred, disillusionment and a feeling of frustration have taken over, only a miracle could restore confidence and allow for the re-establishment of genuine peace. Are we going to wait until it is too late to act? Those who are engaging in these acts, these provocations, are not aware of the terrible risks to which they are subjecting the communities that live in this region. Nor are they aware of the dangers to which they are exposing Israel itself and its neighbours. If more time is lost, tomorrow no one will want peace any more, even those who have fought for it. Are we going to stand by with our arms folded? Let us do something while there is still time, because tomorrow it will already be too late.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of Morocco for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Norway. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): Norway is concerned about the recent approval by the Israeli Government of plans which would alter the demographic balance in the Jerusalem area. This new Israeli plan is not conducive to creating trust between the parties in the Middle East peace process, which is essential to move the process out of the present stalemate. On the contrary, the decision might increase the tension between the parties, as it might contribute to pre-empting the outcome of the final status talks.

Israel should recognize the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention — both de facto and *de jure* — to the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and to other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and should comply fully with its provisions.

Norway appeals to the parties to respect the letter and the spirit of the Oslo accords. Norway urges the parties to the peace process to intensify their bilateral consultations at the highest possible level, to implement the outstanding issues in the Interim Agreements, including the redeployment on the West Bank, and to move as fast as possible to the final status negotiations.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Qatar. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I thank you and your colleagues for so quickly responding to our call for the convening of this meeting.

It is my honour, on behalf of the State of Qatar and the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, to speak at this meeting on a city that is dear to over a billion Muslims throughout the world.

Since the current Israeli Government took power, the peace process in the Middle East has been subjected to continuous suffocation. It would seem that whatever breath remains in the process will finally be stifled by Mr. Netanyahu and his Government if the international community remains unable to assert the international

legitimacy of a State that it established legitimately, under the auspices of the United Nations, more than 50 years ago. That birth led to the infliction of a grave injustice on a people that had not participated in any war, large or small, national or racial, in a foreign continent. It is indeed a historical paradox that the victims of racism and extremism have now descended to depriving another people of their political, religious and human rights. This has turned inside-out the very principles on which the United Nations and its Charter were established.

Since taking power, the current Israeli Government has tried to impose a *fait accompli* on the occupied Palestinian people by attempting to alter the legal, demographic and geographic status of the Arab lands in Palestine, particularly the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. That city is holy to all Arabs and Muslims; no Power on Earth can impose a *fait accompli* on over one billion Muslims for whom Jerusalem is of the utmost sanctity. Since taking power, the current Israeli Government has attempted to drain all content from the peace process in order to serve its political objectives, which run counter to that process. It has prevaricated in implementing Israel's agreements with the Palestinian National Authority; rejected any settlement on Al-Quds Al-Sharif and any withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territories; and turned its back on the Oslo Declaration of Principles of 1993 and the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip of 1995. These agreements were signed under the sponsorship of States Members of this Organization and of this very Council.

The current Israeli Government has tried more than once to kill the peace process, opening a tunnel under the Western Wall of the holy Al-Aqsa mosque, building the Jebel Abu Ghneim settlement, and besieging the Palestinian people and its national leadership. In attempting to flout the peace process and to evade international law, the Israeli Government, on 21 June, announced its plan to expand the boundaries of the municipality of Jerusalem by creating a so-called "municipal umbrella" that would include a number of illegal settlements on the West Bank. This plan aims at intensifying Israel's isolation of the city of Jerusalem and at pre-empting the result of any negotiation to be held between the Israeli and the Palestinian sides.

The peace process initiated in Madrid in 1991, and the Declaration of Principles of 1993 and the Interim Agreement of 1995 that resulted from it, were based on the principle of land for peace. The Israeli Government is attempting to stand the fundamental principles of the peace process on their heads. In this way, it hopes to occupy more land and obtain peace without relinquishing territory. It is attempting to hold the Palestinian people and the entire Arab nation hostage to its intransigence and the Israeli sense of exclusivity. It seems that Israelis believe themselves subject to no international law or legislation and that international public opinion is of no importance whatsoever to them.

The Israeli Government's settlement policy and its attempts to alter the demographic and legal status of the Holy City of Jerusalem are grave violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and of the Hague Rules of 1907. They are a flagrant gauntlet thrown down before the resolutions of the United Nations and international legitimacy, particularly the resolutions of this Council — resolutions 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 271 (1969), 298 (1971), 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 672 (1990) — all of which affirm that any administrative and legislative action or measure taken by Israel to alter the legal status and demographic position of the city of Jerusalem is null and void. These Council resolutions deem the Israeli Government's settlement policy in the occupied territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, to be legally null and void and an obstacle to lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

As we stand on the threshold of a new century, with all its challenges, the international community, as represented by the Security Council, must not accept Israel's justifications for the injustices it continuously metes out to the Palestinian people, in violation of international law. In this specific situation, the Security Council is called upon to uphold its previous resolutions and must compel the Israeli Government to stop flouting the will of the international community, violating international law and threatening the peace process in the Middle East with a slow death, which would be followed by conflagration.

The State of Qatar calls on the international community to compel Israel, the occupying Power in the occupied Arab territories, to abandon forthwith its irresponsible policies in order to spare the peoples of the region the repercussions of the certain death of the peace process, which would in turn unleash further violence.

The President: I thank the representative of Qatar for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is a pleasure for Egypt to see you, Sir, representative of the friendly State of Portugal, presiding over and guiding this Security Council meeting today. I should also like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Mahugu of Kenya, for having so skilfully guided the work of the Council last month.

The Council is meeting today to consider the illegal and provocative decision taken by the Israeli Government on 21 June to expand the limits of the municipality of Jerusalem to include a number of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. The objective is to impose a new *fait accompli* on the ground that would prejudge the outcome of final status negotiations and alter the legal status of Jerusalem, while isolating it from the rest of the occupied territories in the West Bank.

This decision is part of the plan that the present Israeli Government is trying to implement in order to obstruct the peace to which the previous Israeli Government had committed itself. The question of Jerusalem is the most sensitive question in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, Jerusalem enjoys a unique status from a political point of view. Furthermore, Jerusalem represents a spiritual and historical heritage for adherents of the three divine religions. That city is, in fact, a source of deep religious sentiment in the Arab and Islamic world. Therefore, any unilateral measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, that are designed to alter the status of Jerusalem before there is agreement on the final status of the city are all null and void, and we reject them in both form and substance. Not only do such measures run counter to international legitimacy and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, but they strip real peace of any content and are designed to undermine efforts to achieve peace. It is sufficient to recall that the Israeli decision aims at annexing settlements on the Israeli borders. This in itself runs counter to contractual obligations undertaken by Israel with the Palestinian Authority designed to defer the outcome of the fate of these illegal settlements at least until the final settlement has been reached.

This illegal decision demonstrates, at least, the unwillingness of the present Israeli Government to establish peace with its neighbours, and its persistence in ignoring that its pressure in the occupied territories constitutes nothing more than a physical presence as an occupying Power. This presence confers no rights on Israel. On the contrary, it imposes obligations under international and bilateral conventions now in effect, which must be complied with until the final agreement puts an end to the occupation.

The international community, represented by the United Nations and all of its bodies, with the Security Council at the forefront, have firmly confronted the illegal measures undertaken in the past by successive Israeli Governments to annex East Jerusalem. In this context, I should like to emphasize several important realities that should not be forgotten when considering this question.

First, the city of East Jerusalem is an integral part of the rest of the Palestinian territories, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This entire territory was occupied by Israel by force during the June 1967 war. The provisions of the United Nations Charter affirm the necessity of rejecting the principle of the acquisition of territory by force, as was emphasized in resolution 242 (1967). Consequently, all of the territories which were militarily occupied, including Jerusalem, must be liberated. Secondly, the United Nations has reaffirmed in numerous binding resolutions that the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, are territories to which the provisions of the 1907 Hague Convention apply, and they are also legally subject to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. I should like in particular to emphasize article 47 of that Convention, which prohibits the occupying Power from annexing any territory that it occupies, and article 49, which prohibits the transfer of the civilian population of the occupying Power to the occupied territory.

To demonstrate how Israel is flagrantly in contravention of those conventions it is sufficient to point out that there were no Israeli citizens in East Jerusalem before the 1967 occupation, yet now there is already an Israeli majority.

Numerous resolutions of the General Assembly, the most recent of which was adopted at the tenth emergency special session, emphasize that the Fourth Geneva Convention is fully applicable to the occupied Palestinian territories. In consequence of the seriousness of the Israeli violations, the Security Council must reaffirm the applicability of that Convention to those territories, including Jerusalem. Furthermore, under article 1 of the Geneva Convention, the States parties to the Convention have a collective responsibility to guarantee respect for

all of its provisions and their application in all cases. There can be no doubt that the recent Israeli decision requires States parties to take concerted action to ensure the applicability of the Convention.

Thirdly, the Security Council has already adopted numerous resolutions on Jerusalem. Unfortunately, I must state today that Israel has trampled them all underfoot. I should like to refer in particular to resolutions 252 (1968), 271 (1969) and 476 (1980), all of which demand that Israel respect its commitments as the occupying Power.

The most relevant one to our deliberation today is resolution 478 (1980) which provides in paragraph 3 that, *inter alia*:

> "all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem...are null and void and must be rescinded".

It is therefore imperative that the Security Council act to guarantee respect by Israel of all its resolutions, as it does with regard to other States, in order to maintain the credibility of principles and criteria laid down by the Council in various cases and with respect to other States, without any discrimination. Furthermore, the Council must not be perceived to be adopting double standards.

Fourthly, one of the major provisions of the Interim Agreement, signed in Washington in September 1995, should be respected. I am referring to article 31 of that agreement which states:

(*spoke in English*)

> "Neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations"

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Those provisions must be applied, despite the systematic refusal of the Israeli Government to accept the commitments of previous Governments, whether under the Oslo agreements or more recent agreements determining relations between them and the framework for agreement between Israel and the Palestinian party. The principle of respecting and implementing international contractual agreements must be upheld; otherwise no conventions or commitments have any value. In this context, I should like to repeat the comments of the Permanent Observer of Palestine: the violations are the acts that are being committed, not the responses to those acts.

The entire world knows that Israel is continuing its actions and has long-term plans for the annexation and total assimilation of the city of Jerusalem. Israel is continuing to take successive measures designed to change the status and character of Jerusalem, and has been doing so since the occupation in 1967.

Today these attempts are being repeated in its decision to place settlements on the West Bank under Jerusalem's municipal authority. That decision shows that the Israeli Government once again is rejecting all of its contractual commitments and all of the norms of international legality. Instead of deciding to implement the second stage of the withdrawal from the West Bank, this Government has surprised us by taking an illegal decision on Jerusalem. This is reminiscent of the situation that existed before the Madrid Conference — a state of affairs that could launch the region into a new cycle of violence and counter-violence.

Egypt, which has faith in a just and lasting peace, has opened the way to the achievement of peace in the Middle East. Today we are deeply concerned because peace in the Middle East is in a constant state of jeopardy owing to the unilateral measures and steps taken by Israel, which flout the will of the international community and of all peace-loving States. States interested in peace in the Middle East, and in particular the two co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States and the Russian Federation, must shoulder their responsibilities to push the Israeli Government to reverse this serious decision and to stop all of its desperate attempts to place obstacles on the path to peace - attempts that will have adverse and destructive effects on the region and on international peace and security.

What is needed today is the scrupulous and courageous implementation of all the international and bilateral commitments that have been entered into.

Finally, the international community, represented by the Security Council, must today more than ever reaffirm its position of principle, given the illegal nature of the Israeli measures concerning Jerusalem and the non-recognition of the effects of such decisions. The international community must also urge Israel to honour its commitments under the Geneva Convention and under

the bilateral agreements it has signed with the Palestinian side. Israel cannot shirk the provisions of these conventions.

The President: I thank the representative of Egypt for the kind words he addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.